

FROM TIMIDITY TO BOLDNESS

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Scripture: Acts 2: 1-13

Around the world today, churches are going to be celebrating Pentecost Sunday, celebrating the day when God poured out His Holy Spirit on disciples who had been waiting for this gift and this promise that Jesus had told them would come to them from the Father before He left.

As we look at the 2nd chapter of Acts, I want to take you through two interesting scenarios before we get into the word.

Pre-Pentecost – before God poured His Holy Spirit.

- The disciples were filled with fear, afraid of persecution. The Bible tells us that they stayed behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. Fear gripped them and they were hiding.
- There was denial and desertion. Remember Peter, though zealous, he denied Jesus three times. And then Mark writes, “And then everyone deserted Him and fled.”
- There was a lack of understanding of His mission. Even after Jesus’ resurrection, they struggled to grasp His mission. In fact, they asked, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” They were still thinking about it in that kind of way. There was plenty of uncertainty and inactivity. While they did gather for prayer, they took little public action. They didn’t go out; they hid themselves. In fact, their boldest act was choosing Matthias to replace Judas.

After Pentecost.

- We see the same disciples preaching publicly. Peter, once afraid to admit to knowing Jesus, now boldly proclaims, “God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of it.” There was fearlessness in the face of opposition. When commanded to stay silent, Peter and John declared, “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” This was to the Sanhedrin, of whom they were so fearful.
- Their prayer was for boldness, not safety. “Enable Your servants to speak Your Word with great boldness. Stretch out Your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders.” And there were signs and wonders. The Bible tells us that the apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people.
- There was unshakable conviction. Remember Stephen – filled with the Spirit, boldly proclaimed Jesus even in his dying moments.

What a transformation! From a once fearful group of disciples to ones who are so bold in their proclamation. And in the middle of that transformation stands the gift of the Holy Spirit to the disciples.

Acts 2: 1-11

¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on

each one of them. ⁴ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

⁵ Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. ⁶ And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language. ⁷ They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? ⁹ Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹ Cretans and Arabs – we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."

God gave them such utterance to be able to speak boldly in the language that people who would come would understand about the mighty deeds of God. That was the amazing transformation that came over them as the Spirit of God came on them. What an amazing picture! Imagine all of them sitting, waiting, and then, all of a sudden, this wind comes.

I remember a professor of mine preaching on this particular passage and he said, "I always picture what happened, the disciples looking at each other and Peter telling John, 'Hey, John, you have fire on your head.' And John says, 'Don't tell me about that! You have fire on your head.'" Just imagine, tongues of flames sitting on them. What a visual manifestation of God's presence, of His power.

What happened when the Holy Spirit came?

I want to submit to you four things that happened at that time.

- **The church was born.**

The church as we know it today was born.

- **The promise that Jesus gave to His disciples was fulfilled.**

In John 14:16, He said, *"and I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper to be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth."*

Think about where we are today and what we face. It's impossible today to know what is true. There's so much of lies that truth is becoming almost like a mirage in the desert. And yet, the Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth – willing to show us, delineate between truth and lie, falsehood and what is true.

Acts 1:8 *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. And you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."* There will be power that will come upon you that will enable you to witness about me. We see that power as they received the Holy Spirit, as they began to talk about the deeds that God had done.

- **The gospel was going global.**

No longer was it going to be limited to Jerusalem or the people of that area, the Jews. The gospel was going global. The tongues, the different languages that were ministered to, shows that God was sending the gospel out. Each one heard their own language being spoken.

- **God was authenticating the message through supernatural means.**

Not only was He giving them something, but He gave it to them supernaturally. So it defied the natural realm of things. Suddenly, a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven. And they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire. All of them were filled with the

Holy Spirit. God worked marvellously on that first day of Pentecost when He gave the Holy Spirit to the disciples.

And from there, the church spread.

Sometimes we think that this is the only movement of the Holy Spirit. No. The Holy Spirit has been moving continuously throughout history. Let's look at the different times when there has been major movement of the Holy Spirit.

- The first to the third centuries where the apostles, the church fathers, were. They took the gospel to different parts of the known world at that time. They spread the gospel in even in the light of martyrdom.
Acts 4:33 says, "With great power, the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ."
- The third and the fourth centuries to the great monastic movements that went through the church at that time. There were people who went out, but it was done in almost solitude and silence and prayer and spiritual discipline – almost "Be still, and know that I am God." And the church began to understand that move of God. Missionary movements went out at that time. Hospitals, churches and schools were built. Great societal influence happened through the move of the Holy Spirit.
- Then we see the great awakening in the 1800s in the US and UK. Leaders like Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, John Wesley. And the Holy Spirit came into those movements. There was weeping, there was repentance, there was spontaneous worship. The Bible says: "When He comes, He will convict the world concerning sin." Evangelism spread and there was a revival of nominal Christianity. People became vibrant Christians through that movement.
- Then the second great awakening that we read about in the 1800s happened in USA. There was public repentance, emotional preaching, social reform. Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a river, never failing stream. Charles Finney, Barton Stone led these revivals and movements of the Holy Spirit. God continued to move right through history.
- Then the Welsh Revival in Wales. Crime came down. Vice came down. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. "A broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise." There was brokenness in that revival.
- You've all heard about the Azusa Pacific Revival that happened in 1906, the start of the 20th century. William Saymore. There was such an outpouring of God's Spirit at that time in Los Angeles. The gift of tongues was sent out, healing, racial unity, prophecy. "I will pour out My Spirit on all people; your sons and daughters will prophesy," said the prophet Joel many years before. There was such a transformations. It was the birth of global Pentecostalism.

The gift of tongues was given in such wonderful ways. There was an outpouring of missionary work that went out from that part of the United States all over the world. And the one thing that characterized that missionary effort was that every missionary that went out found that they had no problem learning the local language. Isn't that amazing? God sent them with the ability to speak in local languages, fit into the culture and let the gospel bear fruit there.

- The East African Revival, starting in 1930 and going on to the 70s in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda. There was confession, unity, holiness, forgiveness, forgiving one another. There was so much of that. "Confess your sins to one another and pray for each other," James would say. That happened. There was church renewal and regional unity.
- The charismatic renewal in the 1960s. David du Plessis, John Wimber, Dennis Bennett, all of them. There was a rediscovery of spiritual gifts and personal renewal. All of these were manifestations of God's Spirit. God found men and women who would be able to help Him to bring about a revival in different countries around the world. God's Spirit is still working – worked long after Pentecost, continued through the ages.
- The Korean revival. Paul Yonggi Cho, Sundo Kim. I remember going to Seoul, Korea some years ago and walking up the prayer mountain. What a prayer characterized that renewal. God just birthed a desire to intercede. The church would get up (and I'm not talking about just pastors) at 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning to pray. They would pray for one, two or three hours. Up that prayer mountain, there were places where you could stop and verses that would remind. People did these kind of 'pilgrimages' up and down that prayer mountain, praying.
And from there it spread. South Korea, which had just 3% Christians after the war, by this time reached 30% Christian. God was at work. They sent out missionaries to other parts of the world.

I remember being in such awe. I went into the place where they had the service. They had multiple services starting from 6 am, going on. 5,000 people in each auditorium. The Methodist church there, led by Sundo Kim was 250,000 members. 250,000 members just committed to praying. I went with one of those leaders to the homes of some of their parishioners. It was so wonderful to see the way in which they shared what God was doing, shared prayer requests. God was moving powerfully.

- Even today, what is happening in Iran – the proliferation of house churches. God is meeting them. There are so many stories of Jesus appearing in dreams and visions to people. Where preaching cannot be done, He's meeting them through the power of His spirit, touching hearts. There's a revolution that's happening in house churches in Iran. God has always been at work.

The key is that in every place, while there is a huge movement of people, a mass movement of people who are coming together, it always started with a few. It always started with 1 or 2 or a handful of people who said, "We want to see God move in powerful ways here."

I remember being in a place in a Promise Keeper's meeting. I heard that in one city in Columbia, there was one pastor who said, "Let's start praying that the drug cartel in this city will be broken." And they did. They started praying in a home. Pretty soon, the home was too small. They moved to a classroom. Then they moved to the hall of that school. Finally, they were in a stadium praying. And that drug cartel was broken. The back of that cartel was broken. The pastor there paid for what he did. There were many warnings about his life. The day that we were there, he was supposed to be the speaker. He didn't show up, because he had been killed by the drug cartel. But that city was drug free.

God watches, beloved, to see what needs to be done, how His Spirit needs to move. And the power that He's able to give to His children is phenomenal. But He looks for ones who will said, "Lord, here I am, completely submitted to Your will, ready to face anything for You."

How do I receive the Holy Spirit?

Let us look at scripture passages so that we are anchored in His Word.

1. The Bible tells us very clearly that we need to repent and believe.
Acts 2:38 says Repent and be baptized and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
2. Ask God with desire.
Luke 11:13 says, How much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? Do you earnestly desire to have the power of the Spirit within you?
3. Obey and yield. *We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.*
4. *Be filled continuously with the Spirit.* The Greek tense as you know, suggests an ongoing filling. Be continuously filled, every day, every moment. That we allow God to say: That thing in your heart doesn't belong there. It's taking my place. Will you let Me take it out and fill you with My Spirit?

What happens when we receive the Holy Spirit?

What changes happen? What attitudes must we have? Let me give you four.

1. We are sealed as God's child. Ephesians 1:13 tells us that when we believed, we were marked in Him with a seal. The promised Holy Spirit. This seal is God's ownership over our lives, and His guarantee that we belong to Him now and for eternity. We are God's children, you and I. Do you believe that? Do you see yourself as a child of God? Do you see yourself as a son, a daughter of the Most High God? You've been adopted into His family.
2. We are empowered to live for Christ. Acts 1:8 reminds us that we will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us. And we will be His witnesses. The Spirit gives us not only boldness, but direction, strength, and purpose. We are empowered for something, to live as His witnesses.
3. We begin to bear fruit. The evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence in us is not just power. It's about character. Power without character, good character, is an evil thing just waiting to happen. And so, God makes sure that His vessels, you and me, are changed into His likeness, into His character, as we are imbued with power from on high.
4. We're given spiritual gifts to serve others. We don't live in a vacuum. We live as neighbors, touching one another, helping one another, seeing each other and others' needs.
1 Corinthians 12 tells us that the Spirit distributes gifts: wisdom, healing, discernment. You know those spiritual gifts. If you've been in our new members' class, we do the spiritual gifts inventory so that you're never in doubt about what gifts you've been given. Those gifts are meant to be used in the context of fellowship, meant to be used for others.

Applications.

As we look at Pentecost today, in light of all that we have seen, what's our takeaway? What do we leave with? Let me give you four things.

1. Do you know that you are God's child? And do you live like it? So often we hear the line: you've got to live well or it can bring dishonor to the family. How do we live our lives that we

don't bring dishonor to the family of God? As a child of God, are we living in such a manner that we only make people look at us and say, "I want to be a part of that family as well."

2. Are you living in the empowerment of the Holy Spirit? Are you living boldly for Christ? I read some time back about two men who were working in a company, and after about 9 or 10 months, they bumped into each other. They got to talking and found out that both of them were Christians. And they were so happy. They said, "It's so nice to know that you and I are Christians." But the sad part of the reality was it took them 10 months. There was no visible indication for either one of them to know that this was a brother in Christ. Do people you work for know that you are a Christian? Are you living in the empowerment of the Holy Spirit?

I've always found that no one of any faith will say no to you praying for them. I've yet to come across anybody who says: No! I don't want your prayer. Here's the thing, beloved. What does prayer do for you? It connects you to the source of power. To be able to pray for somebody, and for them to see God's power. What a wonderful witness! All it takes is somebody to come to you and say: "Today I woke up with a headache," and for you to be able to say, "Do you mind if I pray for you?" And pray. And trust and believe that God will make that headache go. What a witness. That person is going to say, "Hey, do you know something? I had a headache today. This person prayed for me and it went."

3. Is the fruit of the Holy Spirit visible in your life? In your speech, the way you talk, your thought life, the decisions that you make, or in your relationships. Is the fruit of the Holy Spirit seen? Because that's the Bible that everyone around you reads.
4. Are you using the spiritual gifts that God has given you to serve others and build up His church? Are you using those gifts? Or are those gifts hidden. The term gift – sometimes we lose sight of what a gift is. When you get a birthday gift, the joy of unwrapping that gift is so nice. Some of us are very careful with gift wrappers. We remove the tape carefully and fold the paper. Others just tear it and want to get to the gift.

Just imagine, beloved, when you get to heaven and you get into your mansion, that on the table in your mansion, there's a gift-wrapped gift waiting that you never opened while you were here on earth. What a sad feeling that will bring, because you can't use that gift in heaven. And you lost the opportunity to use it here on earth. If you're a Christian today, the Bible says, "To each one is given a spiritual gift." Nobody here can stand up and say: I don't have a spiritual gift. The question though is: Are you using it?

As we think about the Holy Spirit today, we need to be able to say, "Lord, I know I have the Holy Spirit." The Bible tells us that we have the Spirit of God living within us the day we accepted Him as Savior. And if you have done that, the Spirit of God is within you. But there's a big difference in having the Spirit of God within you and the Spirit of God having control of you. Remember, your will is still in play. And you can tell the Holy Spirit: I have this little attic in my house that's Your room. You stay there until I get to Sunday and then I'll take You with me when I go to church. Rest of the week, you can stay there."

The challenge for us today is it's the Spirit of God every day. I give you free reign to help me with decisions, to help me with my thoughts, to help me with my speech, to help me with the actions that I do, to help me with the conversations that I will have with colleagues and the way I react with people who I just met once. I want You to reign in my heart. I want to give you that freedom.

Beloved, I want to submit to you that it's that kind of will, that kind of submission that enables God to light a fire and start a momentum of a great move of His Spirit. It starts with one. And one then burns the fire so that another sees the fire and they catch it, and then the third, and the fourth, and then a movement begins.

How wonderful it would be if a movement started here because all of us are saying: Begin with me. I am 100% submitted to You Lord, 100% obedient to Your will. Whatever happens, here I am Lord, use me.

Maybe there's breaking that's going to be involved. Maybe remoulding is going to be needed. Maybe there are areas that you've been holding on to that God needs and wants to fill. And then maybe, God is going to say: Here this is the way I will use you. That's your *raison d'être*. That's your purpose in life.

What a glorious day that will become if that's what happens collectively with us. then we can say: Lord, use us so that the will, Your will that is in heaven will become the will that is now here on earth.

Amen.
